

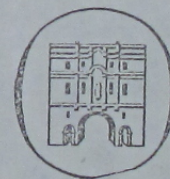
SHAKSPERE

*A CRITICAL STUDY OF HIS
MIND AND ART*

By

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PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

IN the present edition I have made such corrections as appeared needful, and have brought my statements on some doubtful points into harmony with the latest results of Shaksperian scholarship.

I wish to insist upon the statement made on p. 278 that "Julius Cæsar" lies in point of time beside "Hamlet." Both are tragedies of thought rather than of passion; both present in their chief characters, the spectacle of noble natures which fail through some weakness or deficiency rather than through crime; upon Brutus as upon Hamlet a burden is laid which he is not able to bear; neither Brutus nor Hamlet is fitted for action, yet both are called to act in dangerous and difficult affairs. "Julius Cæsar" was probably complete before "Hamlet" assumed its latest form, perhaps before "Hamlet" was written. Still,—giving the reader a caution as I did in the case of "The Tempest"—I am not unwilling to speak of "Hamlet" as the second of Shakspeare's tragedies. "Hamlet" seems to have its roots so deep in Shakspeare's nature, it was so much a subject of special predilection, it is so closely connected with older dramatic work. We acquire the same feeling

with reference to "Hamlet" which we have for Goethe's "Faust"—that it has to do with almost the whole of the deeper part of the poet's life up to the date of its creation.

After Shakspeare had written these two tragedies, or while he was writing them, he continued to write comedy. But the genial spirit of comedy was deserting him. "Twelfth Night" resumes all the admirable humorous characteristics of the group of comedies which it completes. Then the change comes; "All's Well that Ends Well" is grave and earnest; "Measure for Measure" is dark and bitter. In the first edition of this work I did not venture to attempt an interpretation of "Troilus and Cressida." I now believe this strange and difficult play was a last attempt to continue comedy made when Shakspeare had ceased to be able to smile genially, and when he must be either ironical, or else take a deep, passionate and tragical view of life.

I have elsewhere written as follows:

"*Troilus and Cressida* appeared in two quarto editions in the year 1609; in the title page of the earlier of the two it is stated to have been acted at the Globe; the later contains a singular preface in which the play is spoken of as 'never stal'd with the stage, never clapper-claw'd with the palmes of the vulgar,' and as having been published against the will of 'the grand possessors.' Perhaps the play was printed at first for the use of the theatre, and with the intention of being published after being represented, and that the printers, against the known wish of the proprietors of Shakspeare's manuscript, anticipated the first representation and issued the Quarto with the attractive announcement that it was an absolute novelty. The editors of the Folio, after having decided that *Troilus and Cressida* should follow *Romeo and Juliet* among the Tragedies, changed their minds, apparently uncertain how the play

should be classed, and placed it between the Histories and Tragedies; this led to the cancelling of a leaf, and the filling up of a blank space left by the alteration, with the Prologue to *Troilus and Cressida*—a prologue which is believed by several critics not to have come from Shakspeare's hand.

"There is extreme uncertainty with respect to the date of the play. Dekker and Chettle were engaged in 1599 upon a play on this subject, and from an entry in the Stationers' Register on 7th Feb. 1602-3 it appears that a *Troilus and Cressida* had been acted by Shakspeare's company, the Lord Chamberlain's Servants. Was this Shakspeare's play? We are thrown back upon internal evidence to decide the question, and the internal evidence is itself of a conflicting kind, and has led to opposite conclusions. The massive worldly wisdom of Ulysses argues it is supposed in favour of a late date, and the general tone of the play has been compared with that of *Timon of Athens*. The fact that it does not contain a single weak-ending and only six light-endings is however almost decisive evidence against our placing it after either *Timon* or *Macbeth*, and the other metrical characteristics are considered, by Hertzberg, the most careful student of this class of evidence in the case of the present play, to point to a date about 1603. Other authorities place it as late as 1608 or 1609; while a third theory (that of Verplanck and Grant White) attempts to solve the difficulties by supposing that it was first written in 1603 and revised and enlarged shortly before the publication of the quarto. Parts of the play—notably the last battle of Hector—appear not to be by Shakspeare. The interpretation of the play itself is as difficult as the ascertainment of the external facts of its history. With what intention, and in what spirit did Shakspeare write this strange comedy? All the Greek heroes who fought against Troy are pitilessly exposed to ridicule, Helen and Cressida are light, sensual and heartless, for whose sake it seems infatuated folly to strike a blow; Troilus is an enthusiastic young fool; and even Hector, though valiant and generous, spends his life in a cause which he knows to be unprofitable if not evil. All this is seen and said by Thersites, whose mind is made up of the scum of the foulness of human life. But can Shakspeare's view of things have been the same as that of Thersites?

"The central theme, the young love and faith of Troilus given to one who was false and fickle, and his discovery of his error, lends its colour to the whole play. It is the comedy of disillusion. And as Troilus passed through the illusion of his first love for

woman, so by middle life the world itself often appears like one that has not kept her promises, and who is a poor deceiver. We come to see the seamy side of life; and from this mood of disillusion it is a deliverance to pass on even to a dark and tragic view of life, to which beauty and virtue reappear even though human weakness or human vice may do them bitter wrong. Now such a mood of contemptuous depreciation of life may have come over Shakspeare, and spoilt him, at that time, for a writer of comedy. But for Isabella we should find the coming on of this mood in *Measure for Measure*; there is perhaps a touch of it in *Hamlet*. At this time *Troilus and Cressida* may have been written, and then Shakspeare rousing himself to a deeper inquest into things may have passed on to his great series of tragedies.

"Let us call this then the comedy of disillusion, and certainly wherever we place it we must notice a striking resemblance in its spirit and structure to *Timon of Athens*. Timon has a lax benevolence and shallow trust in the goodness of men; he is undeceived and bitterly turns away from the whole human race in a rage of disappointment. In the same play Alcibiades is in like manner wronged by the world; but he takes his injuries firmly like a man of action and experience and sets about the subduing of his base antagonists. Apemantus again is the dog-like reviler of men, knowing their baseness and base himself. Here, Troilus, the noble green-goose, goes through his youthful agony of ascertaining the unworthiness of her to whom he had given his faith and hope; but he is made of a stronger and more energetic fibre than Timon, and he comes out of his trial a man, no longer a boy, somewhat harder perhaps than before, but strung up for sustained and determined action. He is completely delivered from Cressida and from Pandar, and by Hector's death supplied with a motive for the utmost exertion of his heroic powers. Ulysses,—the antithesis of Troilus,—is the much-experienced man of the world, possessed of its highest and broadest wisdom, which yet always remains worldly wisdom and never rises into the spiritual contemplation of a Prospero. He sees all the unworthiness of human life, but will use it for high worldly ends; the spirit of irreverence and insubordination in the camp he would restrain by the politic machinery of what he calls 'degree'—I. i. 75-136. Cressida he reads at a glance, seeing to the bottom of her sensual shallow nature, and he assists at the disillusioning of the young Prince, whose nobleness is apparent to him from the first. Thersites also sees through the illusions of the world, but his very incapacity to

have ever been deceived is a sign of the ignoble nature of the wretch. He feeds and grows strong upon garbage; physical nastinesses and moral sores are the luxuries of his imagination. The other characters, the brute warrior Ajax, the insolent self-worshipper Achilles, Hector, heroic but too careless how and when he expends his heroic strength, are of minor importance. As the blindness of youthful love is shown in Troilus, so old age in its least venerable form, given up to a gratification of sensuality by proxy, is exposed to derision in Pandar. The materials for Troilus and Cressida were found by Shakspeare in Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida*, Caxton's translation from the French, *Recuyles, or Destruction of Troy*, perhaps also Lydgate's *Troye Boke*. Thersites, he probably found in Book II of Chapman's *Homer*. Shakspeare's conception of Cressida and of Pandar differs widely from Chaucer's; in Shakspeare's hands in accordance with the general design of the drama, Cressida and her uncle grow base and contemptible. Some critics have supposed that the love-story was written at a much earlier date than the part which treats of Ulysses; but we have seen that the contrasted characters of Troilus and Ulysses are both essential parts of the conception of the drama, and were created as counterparts."

The following table presents the plays in a series of groups which succeed one another in chronological order. The position of three or four plays of secondary importance may be doubtful; and I claim no certainty for the order of the plays within the groups; but I offer the arrangement of groups with great confidence as to its general correctness. It will be observed that in some cases one group overlaps in point of time that which follows it. To keep the comedies together I have placed "Middle Tragedy" after the third division of what I have named "Later Comedy;" it will suffice if the reader bear in mind that as a fact the comedy overlaps the succeeding group of tragedies.

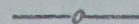
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the boastful Parolles is deceived, flouted, and disgraced by his fellow-soldiers; and (Shakspeare's mood growing earnest, and his thoughts being set upon deep questions of character) Angelo, the self-deceiver, by the craft of the Duke, is discovered painfully to the eyes of others and to his own heart."

For the index which adds to the usefulness of the present edition I have to thank my friend Mr Arthur E. Love of Trinity College, Dublin.

It has been a happiness to me to find that what I have written on Shakspeare has been approved by distinguished Shakspeare scholars in England, in Germany, in France, and in America. I do not thank my critics for their generous recognition of whatever may deserve commendation in my work; I may, however, at least express the sense of encouragement derived from what they have said. One of the earliest voices which spoke a word of emphatic approval of this book is now silent in death, and I cannot but desire to associate, at least by my grateful recollection, this Study of Shakspeare with the honoured name of its reviewer in *The Academy*, the late Mr Richard Simpson.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.



THE attempt made in this volume to connect the study of Shakspeare's works with an inquiry after the personality of the writer, and to observe, as far as is possible, in its several stages the growth of his intellect and character from youth to full maturity, distinguishes the work from the greater number of preceding criticisms of Shakspeare. A sense of hazard and difficulty necessarily accompanies the attempt to pass through the creations of a great dramatic poet to the mind of the creator. Still no one, I suppose, would maintain that a product of mind, so large and manifold as the writings of Shakspeare, can fail in some measure to reveal its origin and cause.

The reader must not fall into the error of supposing that I endeavour to identify Shakspeare with any one of his dramatic personages. The complex nature of the poet contained a love-idealist like Romeo—(students of the Sonnets will not find it difficult to admit the possibility of this); it contained a speculative intellect like that of Hamlet. But the complete Shakspeare was unlike Romeo, and unlike Hamlet. Still it is evident not from one play, but from many, that the struggle between "blood" and "judgment" was a great affair of

Shakspeare's life ; and in all his later works we observe the effort to control a wistful curiosity about the mysteries of human existence. And therefore, I say, a potential Romeo, and a potential Hamlet, taking these names as representative of certain spiritual tendencies or habits, existed in Shakspeare. Nor do I identify Shakspeare with Prospero ; although Shakspeare's temper in the plays of the last period is the temper of Prospero. It would not be easy to picture to ourselves the great magician waited on by such ministering spirits as Sir John Falstaff, Sir Toby Belch, and the Nurse of Juliet.

In order to get substantial ground to go upon I have thought it necessary to form acquaintance with a considerable body of recent Shakspeare scholarship, both English and continental. But I avoid the discussion of purely scholastic questions. To approach Shakspeare on the human side is the object of this book ; but I believe that Shakspeare is not to be approached on any side through dilettantism.

I have carefully acknowledged my obligations to preceding writers. In working out the general design and main features of this study, I was able to obtain little help ; but in details I obtained much. My references express, I may say, considerably more than my actual debt ; for in those instances in which I found that my thought had been anticipated, and well expressed elsewhere, I have noted the coincidence. Doubtless many instances of such coincidence remain unobserved by me. Since I wrote the chapter in which "The Tempest" is considered, I have read for the first time Lloyd's essay upon

the play, and I have found some striking and satisfactory points of agreement between myself and that good critic.

In all essentials I have adhered to the chronological method of studying Shakspeare's writings. But it seemed pedantry to sacrifice certain advantages of contrast and comparison to a procedure in every instance, from play to play, according to dates. Thus, in the chapter on the English Historical Plays I have, for convenience of illustration, treated Henry VI. after King John and before Richard III. In the opening of the eighth chapter I have explained what I believe to be the right manner of using the chronological method. I have called "The Tempest" Shakspeare's last play, but I am quite willing to grant that "A Winter's Tale," "Henry VIII." and perhaps "Cymbeline," may actually have succeeded "The Tempest." For the purpose of such a study as the present, if it be admitted that these plays belong to one and the same period,—the final period of the growth of Shakspeare's art,—it matters little how the plays succeeded one another within that period.

I refer in one passage to Henry VIII., *Act iv., Scene 2*, as if written by Shakspeare. The scene was, I believe, conceived by Shakspeare, and carried out in the spirit of his design by Fletcher.

About half of this volume was read in the form of lectures ("Saturday Lectures in connection with Alexandra College, Dublin"), in the Museum Buildings, Trinity College, Dublin, during the spring of the year 1874.

In some instances I have referred to, and quoted from papers by the Rev. F. G. Fleay as read at meetings of

"The New Shakspeare Society," but which have not received the final corrections of their author.

In seeing the volume through the press, I received valuable suggestions and corrections from Mr Harold Littledale, the editor, for "The New Shakspeare Society," of "The Two Noble Kinsmen," for which I thank him.

I have to thank the Director of "The New Shakspeare Society," Mr F. J. Furnivall, for permission to print the "Trial Table of the order of Shakspeare's Plays," which appears in his introduction to the new edition of Shakspeare Commentaries by Gervinus.

TRIAL TABLE OF THE ORDER OF SHAKSPEARE'S PLAYS.

[This, like all other tables, must be lookt on as merely tentative, and open to modification for any good reasons. But if only it comes near the truth, then reading the plays in its order will the sooner enable the student to find out its mistakes. (M. stands for "mentioned by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia*, 1598.")]

In his Introductory Essays to *Shakespeare's Dramatische Werke* (German Shakespeare Society) Prof. Hertzberg dates *Titus* 1587-9, *Love's Labour's Lost*, 1592, *Comedy of Errors* about New Year's Day 1591, *Two Gentlemen* 1592, *All's Well* 1603, *Troilus and Cressida* 1603, and *Cymbeline* 1611.

	Supposed Date.	Earliest Allusion.	Date of Publication.
FIRST PERIOD.			
Venus and Adonis	1585-7		1593
Titus Andronicus toucht up	(?) 1588	1594 M	[(?) 1594] 1600
Love's Labour's Lost	1588-9	1598 M	1598 (amended)
[Love's Labour's Wonne]		1598 M	
Comedy of Errors	1589-91	1598 M	1623
Midsummer Night's Dream } (? two dates)	1590-1	1598 M	1600
Two Gentlemen of Verona	1590-2	1598 M	1623
(?) 1 Henry VI. toucht up	(?) 1590-2		1623
(?) Troilus and Cressida, begun		1594	
(?) Lucrece			1594
Romeo and Juliet	(?) 1591-3	1595 M	1597
(?) A Lover's Complaint			
Richard II.	1593-4	? 1595 M	1597
Richard III.	1594	? 1595 M	1597
2 & 3 Henry VI. re-cast	(?) 1594-5		1623
John	1595	1598 M	1623

TRIAL TABLE OF THE ORDER OF SHAKSPEARE'S PLAYS—Continued.

	Supposed Date.	Earliest Allusion.	Date of Publication.
SECOND PERIOD.			
Merchant of Venice	(?) 1596	1598 M	1600†
Taming of the Shrew, part	(?) 1596-7		1623*
1 Henry IV.	1596-7†	1598 M	1598
2 Henry IV.	1597-8†	1598 M	1600
Merry Wives	1598-9	1602	1602
Henry V.	1599†	1599	1600
Much Ado	1599-1600†	1600	1600
As you Like it	1600†	1600	1623§
Twelfth Night	1601†	1602	1623
All's Well (? L's. L. Wonne re-cast)	1601-2		1623
Sonnets	(?) 1592-1602	1598 M	1609
THIRD PERIOD.			
Hamlet	1602-3†	(?)	1603*
Measure for Measure	(?) 1603		1623
Julius Cæsar	(?) 1601-3	(?)	1623
Othello	(?) 1604	1610	1622
Macbeth	1605-6†	1610	1623
Lear	1605-6†	1606	1608*
Troilus & Cressida (?) completed	1606-7	1609	1609
Antony and Cleopatra	1606-7	1608 (?)	1623
Coriolanus	(?) 1607-8		1623
Timon, part	1607-8		1623
FOURTH PERIOD.			
Pericles, part	1608†	1608	1609*
Two Noble Kinsmen	1609		1634
Tempest	1610	? 1614	1623
Cymbeline	1610-12		1623
Winter's Tale	(?) 1611	1611	1623
Henry VIII., part	1613†	1613 (?)	1623

* Entered 1 year before at Stationers' Hall.

† Entered 2 years before at Stationers' Hall.

‡ May be lookt-on as fairly certain.

§ Entered in the Stationers' Registers in 1600.

|| "The Taming of a Shrew" was publisht in 1594.

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SHAKSPERE

HIS MIND AND ART

CHAPTER I.

SHAKSPERE AND THE ELIZABETHAN AGE.

IN these chapters an attempt will be made to present a view or aspect of a great poet, and the first word must explain precisely what such a view or aspect is worth, what it professes to be, and what it disclaims. Dr Newman, in his "Grammar of Assent," has distinguished two modes of apprehending propositions. There is what he calls the real apprehension of a proposition, and there is the notional apprehension. In real apprehension there is the perception of some actual, concrete, individual object, either with the eye or some bodily sense, or with the mind's eye—memory, or imagination. But our minds are not so constructed as to be able to receive and retain only an exact image of each of the objects that comes before us one by one, in and for itself. On the contrary, we compare and contrast. We see at once "that man is like man, yet unlike; and unlike a horse, a tree, a mountain, or a monument. And in consequence we are ever grouping and discriminating,

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